

INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY POLICYOFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

24 JUN 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: SecDef Meeting with Belgian MOD Swaelen, 22 June,
1000 hours (U)

(C) MOD Swaelen noted that Belgian efforts to be a loyal Alliance partner had led the GOB to make a difficult decision on full participation in NATO AWACS. SecDef expressed his pleasure with the decision, particularly in view of Belgium's economic difficulties. Swaelen said that the government had also approved a 10-year defense program, setting out a schedule and priorities for defense upgrade. First priority was modernizing field artillery, with Belgian action expected in the next few weeks; second was replacement of helicopters; and, in a few years, replacement of the Mirage aircraft. In addition to equipment modernization, Belgium for its size maintains a large number of troops in the FRG and helps to stabilize Central Africa through its military assistance to Zaire. However, economic problems and coalition government make it difficult to achieve defense goals.

(C) Threat Briefings. SecDef acknowledged the distinctive contributions and problems of Belgium. He noted in particular the difficulty of dealing with coalitions in a government as well as the problem that large neutralist minorities posed to allied leaders. SecDef suggested that briefings on the threat could be useful to the GOB in dealing with the latter. Swaelen proposed to respond shortly as to when the MNC classified briefing could be given to the Parliamentary commission on Foreign Affairs. Another briefing, of lower classification would be offered to the Mixed Commission of Defense and Economics. The GOB would notify us as to approximate classification level for this larger audience. An unclassified briefing will also be provided for NATO use soon.

(S) GLCM Basing - SecDef said that the TNF decision was difficult for many reasons and that we were responsive to European suggestions that we pursue arms control. The need for GLCMs continued due to the ongoing Soviet buildup of SS-20s. He said we needed to go ahead with the initial construction by the end of the year in order to meet the deployment LOC. The US would not interfere with the timing, manner, etc. of the Belgian decision.

(S) Swaelen expressed concern that a new Dutch government might take a negative position on TNF modernization that would cause difficulties, especially among the Flemish Socialists. Nonetheless, the situation in the FRG was what was truly critical to the Belgian position. If the FRG changed its position radically the GOB would have to reconsider its own position. SecDef noted that the FRG's support of the NATO

OSD review completed

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Declassify by: 23 June 1987

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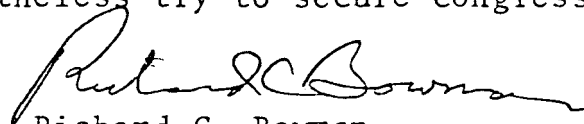
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decision was firm despite those who argued against it. Dr. Ikle noted that as long as the question of deployment remained open, the opposition would seize the opportunity to cause difficulties. Swaelen agreed personally with the need for an announcement by year's end but added that the leader of the Flemish Socialists had threatened to bring down the government if it took action on GLCM deployment. SecDef acknowledged the GOB's problem but stressed the enormous importance for the alliance of announcement of the Belgian decision in light of the growth of neutralist attitudes in Europe. Swaelen said he wanted to make some suggestions on what economic benefits might be helpful in reducing local opposition to GLCM basing. SecDef agreed to entertain Belgian suggestions and said that we would provide some estimates of expenditures and economic benefits we foresaw for the basing area. SecDef acknowledged that the economic benefits document would need to be ready shortly to be of use in preparing the way for a Belgian announcement on site selection.

(C) Artillery Modernization. Swaelen said the GOB would make a decision in the next few weeks on modernizing its field artillery. The US 155 mm M109A2 howitzer was favored but an outright FMS buy was difficult to get through Parliament. Swaelen asked if we would transfer US cannon manufacturing technology to be applied to a Belgian-made 90mm cannon should the GOB purchase the US 155 mm M10942 through FMS. SecDef said that he favored the two-way street on arms cooperation but that the thick-walled process was important to Watervliet Arsenal. Since the Arsenal did not make 90 mm guns, however, erosion of its production base would not arise. Congress might accept such a transfer.

(C) AWACS Contracts. Swaelen noted that NATO was hesitating between two approaches to managing AWACS maintenance. The prime contractor approach was preferred by GOB over piecemeal competitive bidding because Sabena could compete to become prime contractor. SecDef, noting the efficiencies of the prime contracting approach, stated the USG would be happy to support the Belgian position.

(C) F-16 R&D Recoupment. Swaelen recalled their discussions at the DPC on waiving R&C recoupment to increase future F-16 acquisitions. The European Program Group members were drawing up a detailed proposal for SecDef's consideration. SecDef noted he had said then it would be difficult, but he would nevertheless try to secure congressional support.



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cc: SecDef
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